



THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS
AN HISTORICAL FACT

By REV. Z. I. ORDAL, A. B., C. T.



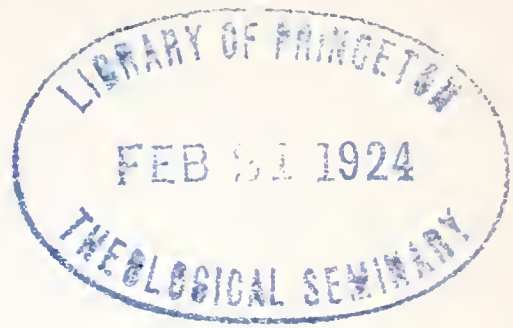
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INTRODUCTION

DID Jesus Christ actually arise from the dead? Ever since that first Easter Sunday some have answered "No," others have answered "Yes." During the Apostolic age those who answered "No" were the declared enemies of Jesus. Their denial of the resurrection did not, therefore, have so great an influence on the believers as has the denial of those in our day who profess admiration and love of Jesus, and who are within His visible church. If those who deny the resurrection of Jesus deem it a duty to spread their unbelief, it most assuredly is a duty of the believer to profess his faith and to show that it rests on the everlasting rock of truth.

The question is of the most vital importance. If Jesus truly arose, then this fact is not only an incontestable, but an adequate proof of the truth of the other fundamental doctrines of Christianity. The resurrection of our Lord is God's emphatic declaration that Jesus was what He professed to be, and that He actually performed what He purposed to do. If

Jesus did not arise, this proves equally incontestably that Jesus was an impostor. His Word cannot be relied on; He definitely stated that He should arise again and be seen by His Apostles. He is not God, as He claimed to be; a being kept captive by death is not God. He made no redemption for sin; even if He committed no other sin than to claim to be what He was not, His conviction and death were just according to Jewish law. Hence He made no atonement for the sins of fallen man. He is, therefore, not the Messiah who should bruise the head of the serpent. If Jesus remained in the grave, the "Serpent" overcame Him.

If Jesus did not arise from the dead, the Christian religion is in its essential purpose just as vain and just as valueless as the other religions of the world.

CHAPTER ONE

THE VERACITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE APOSTLES

As our belief in the resurrection of Jesus rests to a large extent on the testimony of His witnesses, the Apostles, it is well to notice, tho briefly, what kind of men they were, and what personal advantage they might gain thru preaching the resurrection of Jesus.

In the four gospels they tell us of their humble origin and their simple occupation. They admit that they were slow to comprehend their Master's teachings; that they were earthly minded; and that they hoped for personal gain. They confess to fear, to faults, and even to sins. They do not in any way pretend to greatness, even tho they were the companions of Him whom they confessed to be the Son of the living God. There is in all they say about themselves, about Jesus, and about others a frankness and honesty, a humility and directness which only those have who abhor falsehood and reverence truth. In

fact we see them as humble, Godfearing men in the sense of the Old Testament Scriptures. For almost three years they had been the constant companions of Jesus. Even those who deny the resurrection of Jesus consider Him an exceedingly moral man; a man who hated not only lying and deceiving, but even pretense and semblance. The association with Jesus must have helped powerfully to imbue the Apostles with a holy reverence for the truth. And we know that the threat of punishment, yes, even the infliction of punishment could not swerve them from the truth. No greater test for truthfulness can be required.

Even the habitually truthful man may not at all times be entitled to belief. For instance, should great glory or enormous personal gain become his, if he succeeds in getting people to believe his statements, then there may be valid reasons for investigating whether or not the man's desire for glory or for personal gain has overcome his veracity.

What personal gain or what glory could the Eleven or Paul possibly have imagined that they would reap by preaching the resurrection of Jesus, if they were not certain that He actually had risen? Instead of gain, they suf-

ferred loss; instead of honor, they reaped dishonor and the enmity of the men in power within church and state of their own nation. In fact, they staked their very lives on this testimony concerning Jesus. They did this, not merely for an enthusiastic day, but for many long and weary years, even until death silenced them. It was evident to them from the beginning what their lot would be.

Is there a single fact in science, or another fact in history, attested to by men, where the testimony to the truth put the witnesses to so severe a test for so long a time? Yet the Apostles never faltered!

Did they have the mental capacity and the sobriety of mind necessary to distinguish between an historical fact and an illusion? Any one who reads the speeches and letters of Peter, the gospels of Matthew and John, or the letters of Paul can very speedily come to a conclusion regarding their mental capacity. And those who suppose them emotional enthusiasts should notice what "infallible proofs" were necessary before they were convinced of the resurrection of their Master. They should pay attention to the unity and consistency of the Apostolic testimony, given under various

circumstances, among different peoples, and thruout a lifetime,—an utter impossibility had they not been sane men who were convinced that the resurrection of Jesus was an *historical fact*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FACT THAT THE APOSTLES PREACHED

WHEN one considers the situation in which the Apostles found themselves after the death of Jesus, both with respect to the outward surroundings and their inner feelings, it seems very strange, indeed, that they did not entirely disappear from notice. They were so utterly confounded by the occurrences of Good Friday. Their fellow Apostle, Judas, had turned traitor. Their beloved Master was completely overpowered by His enemies who hated Him with a terrible hatred. Jesus Himself seemed unable, at least unwilling, to do anything in His own defense. He was in the hands of His enemies "as a lamb brought to the slaughter". (Isa. 53:7.)

While the intense hatred on the part of high priests, rulers, and populace had been directed against Jesus, the Apostles could not but fear that it would be directed against them also, for they had been His close companions

and friends. Hence they trembled for their own safety. They were utterly beaten. They could not defend themselves, and they had no one in the world to defend them. Had not something of tremendous significance happened, something that turned defeat into victory, the only reasonable course for them to pursue must have been to disappear from the scene as quickly and as quietly as possible, and to hide themselves from friend and foe alike.

As to preaching, what in the world should they have preached, if Jesus had not risen? Dwelling fondly on the memory of past hopes and aspirations, they could at most have said: "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." (Luke 24: 21.) No one will risk his life to proclaim what he once hoped!

Before His Passion, Jesus did not give His Apostles any command about what they were to do, when He no longer was visibly with them as master and guide. The records show definitely that this command was given after His resurrection from the dead. To say that their faith in Him as the Messiah would necessarily impel them to preach, even if they were

not expressly commanded to do so, takes for granted that their faith in Him would survive the tragedy of Good Friday, even tho Jesus did not arise from the dead. Is it reasonable to suppose that their faith would thus survive? The two disciples who journeyed to Emmaus Easter Sunday undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of all, when they said, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." This statement shows a spiritual condition far from that of faith. Continued reflection would make matters worse for the reason that Jesus had on several occasions foretold His resurrection, and promised them that they should see Him and rejoice. Instead of leading them to imagine His resurrection, this would show them that He had been mistaken; thus proving to them that He was not the Messiah. It must, moreover, be evident to all that if they believed Him the Messiah, they could not possibly proclaim that He had risen from the dead on the third day, when He as far as they knew continued dead with the body in the grave.

Furthermore. The Apostles began their preaching in Jerusalem itself. It was not

in some remote corner of the land, where the facts could not be investigated; nor was it in some ignorant community, where they might have hoped for the aid of superstition and the love of the marvelous, but in Jerusalem: where Jesus was put to death; where He was buried; where He arose again. Yes, they began their preaching practically at once right in the temple, where the learned and powerful enemies had full power! The Apostles knew that the facts were on their side. They did not fear an investigation, but courted it in the very city where all had happened; where there was an abundance of men who had the will, the intelligence, and the means to make a thoro investigation.

The very fact, therefore, that the Apostles preached, and that they preached in Jerusalem, shows most emphatically that something had happened which transformed the deadening sorrow of Good Friday into exuberant joy, and which turned the crushing defeat of that day into the most complete and glorious victory! Nothing less than the resurrection of Jesus on the third day could do this. So the fact that the Apostles preached bears

identically the same testimony which their message bears; namely, Jesus is truly risen from the dead.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIRECT TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION BY THE APOSTLES AS PREACHERS

THIS chapter does not deal with the testimony to the resurrection of Jesus given in the four Gospels and in Acts 1:1-12. That will be treated in later chapters. Here is gathered the direct and definite testimony to the great fact, given by the Apostles in their preaching as recorded by St. Luke in the Acts, and as it is found in the Apostolic letters to congregations and private persons. To help make sure that the reader will study it, notice its clearness, definiteness, as well as its extensivity, it is gathered here for the convenience of the reader. It must also be borne in mind that, besides this direct testimony, the books of the New Testament have an abundance of passages which take for granted the acceptance of the resurrection as a fact.

Acts 1:21, 22: Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, be-

ginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Acts 2: 23, 24: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

Acts 2:31, 32: He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Acts 3: 14, 15, 26: But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from His iniquities.

Acts 4: 10: Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom

God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Acts 4: 33: And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5: 30: The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Acts 10: 39-41: And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.

Acts 13: 29-37: And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up

Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But He, whom God raised up again, saw no corruption.

Acts 17: 2, 3: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Acts 17: 30, 31: And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath

given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

Acts 26: 22, 23: Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Rom. 1: 3, 4: Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Rom. 4: 23-25: But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Rom. 6: 4, 5: Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted

together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.

Rom. 6: 9, 10: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died; He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

Rom. 7: 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Rom. 8: 11, 34: But if the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Rom. 14: 9: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Rom. 10: 9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe

in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

I Cor. 6: 14: And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power.

I Cor. 15: 3-8: For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

I Cor. 15: 12-20: Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom

He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

II Cor. 4: 14: Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Gal. 1: 1: Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).

Ephesians 1: 20-23: Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Philippians 3: 9-11: And be found in Him,

not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is thru the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death: If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Colossians 1:18: And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.

Colossians 2:12: Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him thru the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.

Colossians 3:1: If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

I Thessalonians 1:10: And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

I Thessalonians 4:14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

II Timothy 2:8: Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel:

Hebrews 13:20, 21: Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, thru the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, thru Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I Peter 1:3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I Peter 1:18-21: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and

gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

I Peter 3: 18-21: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit: By which He also went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Revelation 1: 5, 18: And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the firstbegotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The only books of the New Testament—the Gospels excepted—from which I have not quoted direct testimony to the resurrection of

Jesus are the following: II Thessalonians, I Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, I, II, and III John, and Jude. Any one who takes the trouble to read these books, will find that they all, excepting III John and Jude, make definite statements which show that the writer took for granted that the readers believed the resurrection of Jesus to be a fact.

The nature of III John explains why the fact of Christ's resurrection does not appear there. And as Jude so insistently warns his readers against departing from the doctrines, taught by the Apostles, he thereby warns them against unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus.

What unanimity in the teachings of all the Apostles, of whose teachings we have any record! What consistency in their testimony thruout their whole ministry! Such unanimity and consistency in the testimony of men who for years were separated from one another; who labored in different countries; and who preached to audiences differing widely in culture and in religious beliefs, can be understood only when we accept that they testified to a definite and an actual fact, when they testified to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CENTRAL POSITION OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION IN THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

THE two outstanding figures in preaching and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ are Peter and Paul. That each was given a special field in which to work, was recognized by the other Apostles as we see from Galatians 2: 7-9. This is also historically evident from the book of Acts. Peter was Christ's standard bearer among the Jews, Paul among the Gentiles.

In looking over the testimony quoted in the preceding chapter with the purpose of finding out the importance claimed for the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, we notice how Peter in his addresses lays great stress on this that the Apostles were to be *witnesses* of Christ's resurrection. (Acts 1: 22; 2: 32; 3: 15.)

Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus had said to His Apostles: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all

Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:7.) From Acts 10:39 we see that Peter recognized the obligation to be a witness of all the things which Jesus did. And yet it is clearly evident that Peter considered it especially important to bear testimony to Christ’s resurrection, for it is the only fact concerning Jesus which he specifically mentions as something concerning which they are to testify to as witnesses.

The truth of this statement is proven by Peter’s words, when he states the purpose for selecting a man to take the place of Judas. True, only those are eligible who had been with them from the baptism of John until the ascension. The candidate must have personal knowledge of all Jesus said and did during His whole ministry. However, the one point which is emphasized, and that to a degree one would not expect, is the resurrection. He says: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness of His resurrection.”

(Acts 1: 21, 22.) Notice! *To be a witness of His resurrection.*

They were to be witnesses, that is testify as men who had personal knowledge of the fact; not knowledge based on report, but knowledge arrived at thru the rational use of their senses. This is naturally the meaning Paul ascribes to the term "witness" when in his speech at Antioch in Pisidia he says: "But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people." (Acts 13: 30-31.)

This idea John expressed as follows: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you (I John 1: 1-3.)

It is not fanciful notions, or hearsay, or speculations, they testify to as witnesses, but to facts belonging to this world of sight, touch, and hearing. *Facts with which they themselves as rational, sentient beings are personally acquainted.*

Of all the great and wonderful facts which

they experienced during their three years' companionship with Jesus, Peter mentions only one by name, when he speaks about their duty as witnesses. This fact he mentions repeatedly, thus throwing it into bold relief as a mountain peak before the tinted sky of sunset. And this fact is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

* * *

What importance does the Apostle Paul ascribe to the resurrection of Jesus? From the record of his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia on his first missionary journey we see (Acts 13: 33-35) that, in preaching to an audience composed mainly of Jews, he lays stress on the fact that the Christ's death and resurrection were at variance with their views of the Messiah, it was in perfect accord with the teachings of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Him. He does the same at Thessalonica on his second missionary journey several years later. (Acts 17: 2, 3.) Again, many years later he does likewise in his defense before King Agrippa at Caesarea. (Acts 26: 22, 23.) From the third and fourth verse of the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the

Corinthians we see that he had done so at Corinth. His words are: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

Every one must see the great importance of the fact that Jesus conforms, especially in that which seems strange and unreasonable, to the picture painted of the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures. The fact that He so conforms proves Him the Messiah.

One of the most remarkable as well as distinguishing features of the Christian religion is its firm assurance of a life after death for each person. It does not present an unreal and shadowy existence, but a real life; not a life of the soul only, but a life of the whole human being; for on judgment day body and soul shall be reunited forever. The unbeliever shall, indeed, be damned, but he who accepts Christ in a living faith shall live with Him in the most complete bliss thru all eternity. This is life and immortality. It is Christ who has brought to light this life and this immortality. (II Tim. 1: 10.)

In several of the passages quoted from Paul in the preceding chapter, he emphasizes the fact that this life is absolutely dependent on Christ's resurrection. The one stands or falls with the other. And as Christ's resurrection is a fact, so shall our resurrection become a fact. This is pointedly brought out in I Cor. 15: 12-20.

This same passage states another point with equal emphasis. It is this: *Preaching is vain, faith is vain, the Christian is among men the most miserable*, if Christ is not risen from the dead. (Was Paul near enough to the source of Christianity to know its nature? Was his intellectual discernment and his spiritual capacity sufficient to grasp the truth?) Were not Christ risen from the dead; we Christians would be the most miserable of all men! God be praised! He adds with absolute certainty: "but now Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15: 20.)

Tho the truth and the saving power of Christianity is established by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul shows that it is necessary for the individual to accept this truth, if he is to become a partaker of what Christ won

with His life, suffering, and death, and sealed with His resurrection. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10: 9.)

Jesus was condemned to death by the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities because He claimed to be the Son of God in a literal sense. Paul teaches (Rom. 1: 4) that Jesus was powerfully declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. Had not Jesus been the Son of God as He under oath had said that He was (Matt. 26: 63, 64), He would not have risen. Death would have kept Him captive, for the wages of sin is death. His resurrection from the dead is an emphatic declaration on the part of God,—in fact, the most emphatic declaration imaginable,—to the absolute truth of Christ's claim. That the resurrection from the dead was an unavoidable necessity, since Jesus was the Son of God, is the thought which lies in the statement of Peter on Pentecost Sunday, when he says that it was impossible that death should hold Him. (Acts 2: 24.)

As the Son of God, Jesus must rise from

the grave. If He did not so arise, He was not only an impostor, but a perjurer; one who perjured Himself on the very day of His death, and thus caused His death.

How natural is it not, therefore, that the enemies of Jesus should so strenuously deny His resurrection? But how can one who claims to be a Christian, a disciple, a follower of Jesus, join in with the enemies and deny His resurrection? What would we in the late war have called a man who, while claiming the right to be a soldier in our army at the front, and who as a consequence held a position of great trust, nevertheless joined in with the enemy in attacking our most important strategic position! What would we have called him? How would we have dealt with him? What work within the Christian Church is actually performed by the man who denies the resurrection of Jesus, tho claiming to be a Christian? Be he a pastor of a congregation, an editor of a church paper, a professor in a church college or theological seminary? Can he have any other work to perform than the work of a traitor? The church compels no one to accept its faith; and there surely is room among the open and avowed enemies of Jesus!

When he, who has the spirit of the enemy, nevertheless continues within the fold of the church, eats its bread and enjoys its privileges, is it not because he has the shriveled, dishonest, and vicious soul of the traitor?

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FACTS ON WHICH THE ASSURANCE OF THE ELEVEN RESTED

WE have in the preceding chapter seen that the Apostles, when speaking of the historical facts concerning Jesus, hold up His resurrection from the dead as the one most prominent. Nor are they uncertain or hesitating in their manner of presenting this fact. They are clear, definite, absolutely certain.

The facts on which their assurance rested are recorded by Matthew, chapter 28; Mark, chapter 16; Luke, chapter 24; John, chapters 20 and 21; Acts 1: 1-12.

In giving the facts pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus, the sacred writers follow their usual custom of using exceedingly great brevity. As each one is independent in his presentation, and as none of them tells all the events, it is not surprising that one narrates facts not mentioned by the others. To dovetail the four presentations together into one narrative, so that the different events are placed

in their exact chronological order, is very difficult. It is, in fact, impossible with respect to certain details. The main facts, however, stand out very clearly. No one who reads the Evangelists with an unprejudiced mind will be led to disbelieve their statements because he is unable, lacking the necessary knowledge, to arrange all the details properly.

I now ask the kind reader to take his Bible or New Testament and to read several times with care the report of the resurrection of our Lord, as given by each Evangelist (see references above), and then continue the reading of this and the following chapter.

In the morning of the third day after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Apostles were astonished and distressed by the report that the grave of Jesus was empty. This report, first brought by Mary Magdalene, was confirmed immediately afterwards by the other women, who had visited the grave early in the morning. Peter and John, forgetting their fear for personal safety, immediately rushed to the grave in order to make personal investigations regarding the truth of the report. They entered the grave and found the linen clothes, in which the body had been wound, lying there,

and the napkin, which had been about His head, wrapped together in a place by itself (John 20: 1-7), but the body of the Lord was not there. It was gone. The grave was empty as the women had reported. This was an indisputable fact. They reported to the other Apostles and disciples what they had found. (Luke 24: 24.)

What had become of Christ's body? Who could desire to steal it? What did it mean that the grave was empty? These and many other questions were no doubt asked and discussed. If they were ignorant of the fact that the enemies had caused the grave to be sealed and a guard of Roman soldiers stationed there, they no doubt, soon received a report of this as well as of the story some of these soldiers were spreading, saying that the disciples of Jesus came and stole the body, while the guard was asleep. (Matt. 28: 11-15.) This report probably increased their fear, but it certainly did not explain how the grave became empty, nor did it tell them what had become of the body. On the contrary, it made matters worse. Now they knew that Christ's enemies had taken all the precautions possible to keep the body in the grave. Therefore, the enemies had

not stolen the body. As to the report of these soldiers that the disciples had stolen it, they knew that to be utterly false. (The report was as a matter of fact absurd.) But the grave was empty! Why? And what did it mean that the Roman soldiers reported that the grave was empty and, in explanation of the fact, were willing to admit so grave a military crime as to have slept, while on guard duty?

In their consternation over the report that the grave was empty, the Apostles—John possibly excepted—had paid slight attention to the additional report of the women to the effect that they had “seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive” (Luke 24: 23), yes, that the women had met and spoken with Jesus Himself. (Matt. 28: 9, 10.) And in so far as they paid attention to this part of the report, they gave it no credence for “their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” (Luke 24: 11.)

What the women told them would, indeed, explain the empty grave, but the explanation was too unreasonable. There must be some other explanation. If Jesus was alive, why did He not come to them? Why should He

appear to the women instead? No, the women surely were mistaken! However, the grave was empty. The testimony of the women to this fact was true. Peter and John had made a thoro investigation. Where could the body be?

The Gospel according to St. John shows how this Apostle, "whom Jesus loved," had treasured in his heart the teachings of Jesus. When the others in restlessness, consternation, and fear, failed to remember how Jesus had told them that He should arise from the dead on the third day, John may have remembered these words. Hence, when he beheld the empty grave, where there was no indication of the violence of an enemy, "he saw and believed," tho he as well as the others did not yet understand that according to the Scriptures Jesus "must rise again from the dead." (John 20: 8, 9.) He does not tell us the effect produced on the disciples, when Mary Magdalene returned and reported that she had seen and spoken with Jesus. But Mark informs us (16: 9-11), that they did not believe her report any more than they had believed that of the other women. Perchance the quiet and contemplative John had at this time expressed

his own belief in support of Mary's report. If so, he had been silenced by the emphatically expressed unbelief of his colleagues.

However, the grave was empty. Either someone had taken the body, or the women, Mary Magdalene, and John were right in their contention that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The fears for their own safety, the discussions and uncertainty about what had become of the body of their beloved Master, and above all, the profound sorrow over the untimely and cruel death of Jesus, stirred the little circle of disciples, alone in the great city, to the uttermost. It is not strange, therefore, that two of them left the city for the country, where they in peace could cherish their sorrow. "While they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." (Luke 24: 15, 16.) Or as Mark puts the last statement, "He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." (16: 12.)

How perfectly in accord with the character of Jesus, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is it not that He came to the rescue of these two men, who evidently were on the point of

despair and complete unbelief! Again, is it not in perfect harmony with the method of His teaching during the days of His ministry that, instead of revealing Himself to them at once, He conceals His identity, until He has prepared them by opening to them their understanding of the Scriptures; thus showing them that when the suffering and death of Jesus caused them to doubt that He was the Messiah, and when the report of the women caused them to be troubled, it was all because they were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." (Luke 24:25.) While He thus talked with them, they were greatly comforted; for as He "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (v. 27), the truth began to dawn upon them. They were yet weak in faith and uncertain; so when He seemed to be passing by Emmaus, where they intended to stop, they constrained Him to stay with them. "And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and He vanished out of their sight." (Luke 24: 30, 31.)

O, wonder of wonders! It was not only

true what the women had reported and what this kind companion had proven from the Scriptures, but the risen Savior had revealed Himself to them! Filled with inexpressible joy, they hastened back to Jerusalem to bring the joyous tidings to those whom they had left in sorrow and despair. They found the Apostles and the other disciples gathered together. But before they could utter their message of joy and hope, they are met with the announcement, "The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon." (Luke 24: 34.)

We do not know who it was that spoke these words of cheer. But it is reasonable to suppose that they were spoken by John. The appearance of Jesus to Peter had made John's faith firm. His heart exulted in the conviction of his beloved Master's resurrection, and his loving disposition urged him to do his utmost to bring to others his own joy.

Knowing how heart-broken and miserable these two men had been when they left Jerusalem, he hastens to inform them of the resurrection, not knowing what had happened to them in the meantime. How joyfully must not the two have related their own blessed experience, both on the way and in Emmaus!

It seems very strange, but their report fared no better than the report of the women, that of Mary Magdalene, and that of Peter had fared. "Neither believed they them." (Mark 12: 13.)

However, the gloom of that eventful day's morning was beginning to disappear. A few were extremely happy in the firm belief that Jesus had truly risen, even if the great majority were unable to share this joy, fearing some grievous mistake on the part of those, who claimed to have seen the Lord. But they all surely paid close attention as the two, who had just returned from Emmaus, told of their meeting with Jesus on the way, how He had expounded the Scriptures to them, and how they finally recognized Him when He was breaking the bread. "And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." (Luke 24: 36.)

This sudden appearance of a being among them, "when the doors were shut" (John 20: 19), to prevent an unexpected entrance by anyone, caused them to be "terrified and affrighted," thinking that they saw a spirit. (Luke 24: 37.) It is very possible that even

those, who had seen Jesus before that day, were for a moment frightened because of the suddenness as well as unexpectedness of His appearance among them. It is evident that they all had been so engrossed by the narrative of the two disciples, that they had not noticed a stranger present, until they heard His greetings. Those who did not believe that Jesus had arisen from the dead must, indeed, have become thoroly frightened.

“And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? and they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their under-

standing, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day.” (Luke 24: 28-46.)*

From Mark we learn that Jesus at this time “upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.” (16: 14.) That they did not accept as true the testimony given them by trustworthy fellow disciples, was not to their credit. Their unbelief did not spring from any virtue in them, but from their “hardness of heart”. What must have been the condition of their heart if they had not believed now, when they had seen Him with their own eyes and heard Him with their own ears, yes, felt of Him with their own hands!

Not only were the Eleven, Thomas excepted (John 29: 24), present, but the other disciples also were gathered here. (Luke 24: 33.) How large the number was, we do not know. That

* In his brevity Luke (also Mark) omits to tell of the appearances of Jesus from now on until His ascension. As a consequence he gives in this connection the Lord's commission to the Apostles. This commission was given, as we shall see, at a later date.

the number was considerable we have a right to believe, for Luke tells us (Acts 1: 15) that immediately after the ascension of Jesus the Apostles and the disciples numbered about one hundred and twenty. As there had been no public preaching in the meantime, it is reasonable to suppose that these were the ones who in Jerusalem had continued true to Jesus.

It was, at least, not only two or three, or even only a dozen persons, who saw, heard, and spoke with the risen Savior. And they did not merely see Him in a general way. He showed them His hands and His feet, unmistakably marked by the crucifixion. He asks them to handle Him so as to ascertain that He has flesh and blood, and that He is not a disembodied spirit. When this had been done, it seems that their unbelief, which died so tremendously hard, finally had been overcome. But the joy of seeing Him alive was so supremely sweet that it seemed too good to be true. There was yet an element of doubt. They were not absolutely certain that He who was dead now actually stood there among them, truly alive and in His own body. So He asks them for something to eat (they were at supper when He appeared), and they gave

Him remnants of their supper, which He ate in their presence.

They had "wondered." No doubt about *how* Jesus could be alive again and *how* He could appear among them. Jesus takes this into consideration also. He had assured them before His death that His word was absolutely reliable. He now reminds them of the fact that He had told them that He should suffer; that He should die; and that He should arise again on the third day. He shows them, what He had showed to the two disciples on the journey to Emmaus, that, instead of being something unexpected, *this* was fulfilling "what was written of Him by Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms."

How could they doubt any longer? They saw Him with their own eyes, felt of Him with their own hands, heard Him speak with their own ears. He had the marks of the cross on His body. He could tell them their thoughts as well as what He had told them before His death. He showed them that all had been foretold in the Scriptures. It is strange that these men from now on are certain, absolutely certain, that the resurrection

of Jesus on the third day is an actual, an historical fact?

Thus closed the third day after the crucifixion, that glorious Easter Sunday. In the morning of that day the tragedy of Good Friday filled their hearts with the gloom of sorrow and despair. Then came the distressing report of the empty grave. This fact, so inexplicable to them, is verified. This added vexation, anxiety, and restlessness to the burden already too heavy to bear. Then beams of light began to appear. To begin with these beams of light did not scatter the darkness, but made it seem the deeper. Finally the glorious day, thus heralded, bursts upon the sorrowing group in its noonday splendor, filling them with joy supreme. Surely He had kept the promise given them the last night He was with them: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." (John 14: 18.) Verily, He turned their sorrow into joy. (John 16: 20.)

Thomas was not present in the assembly of his fellow disciples that day. Why? We do not know. Possibly for no better reason than many in our day have, who stay away from the Sunday gathering of the disciples of Jesus.

What a terrible week did he not have to live thru! Terrible, for the reason that he had not been present and because he would not believe the testimony of his fellow Apostles. When they joyfully told him their experience, he answered: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John 20: 25.)

What an awful mental, or rather moral, condition to get into! Flatly to refuse to accept as true what his trustworthy fellow Apostles told him had been demonstrated before their very eyes! No, he would not believe them. In this case he would trust no evidence but that of his own senses. To him the resurrection of Jesus evidently seemed to be an utter impossibility. He did not stop to consider that what would be an utter impossibility for man, would be the necessary sequence of events, if Jesus truly were what He had claimed to be, and what Thomas had believed Him to be. By God's grace even the rationalistic Thomas was destined to learn this to his peace and joy in time and eternity.

On the first Sunday after Easter, the dis-

ciples were again gathered together. This time Thomas was present. "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20: 26-30.)

He certainly did not now have any greater comprehension of *how* it could be possible for Jesus to have risen from the dead than he had before; yet now he *knew* it to be a fact. Possibly he was beginning to realize more fully than before what lay in the term "Son of God", and that he gives expression to this by confessing Jesus to be his Lord and his God.

We have now seen the facts, as given in the records, on which the Eleven—and the disciples with them—based the certainty of the truth of their testimony regarding the resurrection of Jesus. He appeared at various times to the Eleven and others after this, but

as far as the Eleven were concerned, the purpose of those later appearances was not to convince them of the reality and certainty of His resurrection. There were other purposes. The records examined clearly show that so far Jesus had appeared to His disciples and Apostles for the purpose of bringing to them *the knowledge of and to convince them of the reality of His resurrection from the dead*. To do this He not only appeared to them in an unmistakable manner, but He gave them "infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) of His resurrection; and He taught them that as He truly was the Messiah, it could not be otherwise: He had to *die*; He likewise had to *rise* again from the dead.

Whether His appearance to James (I Cor. 15:7) belongs in this division or in the following one, cannot be determined, as we do not possess the necessary information regarding it.

The Apostles had now reached that plane of faith where they should have been on Good Friday, and where they would have been, had they accepted the words of Jesus concerning Himself in their simple, literary sense. To this plane the message which the angel sent from the grave with the women sought to bring them. These appearances of Jesus to His

Apostles and disciples were *extra gifts of grace*, made necessary by their deplorable lack of faith.

CHAPTER SIX

APPEARANCES OF JESUS WITH A SPECIAL IMPORT

I. *The Reinstatement of Peter to Apostleship*

THE twenty-first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John tells us of this appearance. The Apostles had gone north to Galilee, undoubtedly in preparation for the meeting Jesus had told them of before His Passion. (Matt. 26: 32; 28: 7, 16; Mark 14: 28; 16: 7.) The time for the meeting had not yet come, so Peter says to six of the other Apostles one evening, "I go a fishing." We can easily understand why. This little company of men had been poor, even while Jesus was with them. And surely their finances had not improved since His death and resurrection. As fishing had been Peter's trade before he became an Apostle, it is natural for him to plan to earn something at his old trade now, when he had returned to the place where he had been accustomed to follow that vocation. The others join him gladly. But in spite of the whole night's work, no fish is caught. "But when the

morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of the fishes." (John 21:4-6.) Then John realized that the person on the shore must be Jesus. Had He not, several years before, when they had worked the whole night without results, asked them to do something just as unreasonable as what they were asked to do now, and with the same wonderful results? So he said to Peter, "It is the Lord." On hearing this, Peter throws his coat off, jumps into the sea, and swims to shore to meet his beloved Lord. The others came in the boat, dragging the net, for it was so heavy that they could not draw it into the boat. When they came to land, "they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." Thus Jesus again helped and comforted them.

The real purpose of this appearance is shown by what followed when they had had their breakfast with the Lord. The Apostles

were to be the Lord's witnesses, as we saw in chapters three and four. But on Friday morning of Passion week, when Jesus was on trial before the high priest, Peter had thrice emphatically denied Him. Thus he had fallen both from the grace of apostleship and discipleship. The appearance of Jesus to repentant Peter on Easter Sunday must have indicated that this mortal sin had been forgiven, so that Peter again enjoyed the grace of discipleship. But Peter had by his public denial forfeited his exalted position as one of the Eleven. Nothing but a reinstatement by the Lord Himself could give Peter the standing which he had enjoyed during the ministry of Jesus.

The first call to apostleship had come to Peter on the shore of this very lake (Matt. 4, 18ff.), possibly on the very spot where they now were gathered. Surely a fitting place for the reinstatement. As Peter had thrice denied his Lord, the Lord now asks him thrice, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" On the humble, but firm and thrice repeated reply of Peter, that he did love Him, he was again numbered among the Eleven, by being commanded to feed the lambs and sheep of Jesus.

The Lord tells him in addition that, while his fear of possible death on Good Friday morning led him to deny Jesus, his steadfast confession of Him should in his old age be crowned with death on a cross.

To the worldly minded and even to disciples, who have little spiritual insight, the martyr's death, here foretold Peter, might seem to be a punishment, merited by his fall. It is instead a glorious crown as a reward for faithful and courageous service.

II. *The Eleven Receive Their Mission*

As the Eleven had been thoroly convinced of the resurrection of Jesus as a real, an historical fact, and as Peter had been reinstated to the high position which he had been privileged to enjoy until his shameful denial of Jesus, everything was ready for the meeting in Galilee which Jesus had appointed for His Apostles before His Passion.

This meeting of the Apostles with the risen Lord had, as we have seen, been announced for a long time. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that it was known by all the disciples of Jesus. That all who possibly could come there would be present, must be evident to all. Hence it is very probable that Paul

refers to this meeting when he in I Cor. 15: 6 says: "After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto the present, but some are fallen asleep."

Matthew tells of this meeting in chapter 28, verses 16-20: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations [The Revised Version renders this correctly: make disciples of all nations], baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

When Matthew says, "some doubted" this might at first glance give the impression that some of the Eleven doubted. But he does not say, some *of them* doubted. He does not indicate who the "some" who doubted were. Having come to this place for the definite pur-

pose of meeting the Lord, whom they now knew to be risen from the dead, it would be remarkable if some of the Eleven doubted. But when we remember that the angel had told the women at the grave of this meeting, that it thus was general knowledge among the disciples, even among those who had not yet seen Him after the resurrection, it is, as was stated, reasonable to suppose that as many as possibly could come, would come to this meeting. That some of these should have doubted, when they first saw Jesus, would not be strange.

Would it not be surprising if Jesus, who had such patience and who did everything so thoroly and well, should have hastened to give His kingly command to such an extent, that He gave it before those who should carry it out were convinced of the reality of the existence of the being, who commanded them to go forth to do His work?

No, the Eleven did not doubt. They had been fully convinced. They had gathered here at His definite appointment. And the purpose of the appointment is as clear as the noon-day sun on a cloudless day. They were to receive their commission. They were to learn

by what means they should perform it. Since He promises to be with them to the end of the world, we understand that His orders were given once and for all time to those who were to be His messengers.

It was said of Jesus in the time of His flesh that He did not speak as the scribes, but as one who had authority. Surely He speaks with authority here. As the omnipotent Lord of all He commands His messengers to go forth. He is not satisfied with a little work, *all nations* are to be reached: not in a superficial, impersonal way; they are to be made His disciples, that is, followers, who recognize Him as *Lord* and as *Redeemer*. This astounding work shall be accomplished by His messengers thru the seemingly insignificant means: *the Sacrament of Baptism* and the "*foolishness of preaching*"! (I Cor. 1: 21.)

III. *He Departs from Them with His Visible Presence*

Mark mentions the ascension of Jesus (16: 19), but he is so brief that he does not specifically mention that the ascension took place in the sight of the Apostles. Luke tells us this. In the Gospel he also is very brief, but it is

evident that Jesus was with His Apostles and parted from them by His ascension, for he says: "And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." (16: 51.) In the Acts (1: 4-12) Luke describes more in detail this occurrence on the fortieth day after the resurrection. Here we learn that they beheld Him rise heavenward, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. (v. 9.)

Thus it became evident to them that they no longer should see Him among them. He had now gone to the Father with His visible presence. They had received all the instructions which they were to receive orally from Him. In addition to this lesson, Christ taught them this last time He was with them that they were not yet ready for their work. They must receive power from on high. This they would receive when the Holy Ghost came upon them. In the meantime, and He assures them that it will not be many days hence, they must abide in Jerusalem. Even if they were full of joy because of Christ's victory over death; even tho they might burn with desire to proclaim publicly that Jesus had not been overcome by His enemies, but was dem-

onstrated to be what He claimed to be, they must patiently wait. They are to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth; but this they can be in a full sense only, when they have received the Holy Ghost. He shall remind them of all Jesus had told them; He shall guide them into all truth (John 14: 26); He should never leave them, but abide with them for ever. (John 14: 16.) They may not have realized what a superhuman task Jesus laid upon them, when He gave them His royal command on the mount. Mere human power, however great, even tho supported by the most complete certainty and intensified by the most exalted enthusiasm, would be unable to perform the work. They needed the gift of the Holy Ghost for their own sake. Should their courage not fail them in times of great peril or tremendous obstacles, they must have the firm assurance that He was ever present to grant them the necessary wisdom and strength. The Holy Ghost was needed by those whom they should win for Christ. He who should accept their testimony so as to become a real disciple of Jesus, he must be born anew. This new birth is not of man, but of the Spirit.

This regeneration is effected, indeed, by the means Jesus had commanded them to use, but it is not effected by virtue of *their* baptizing and preaching. It is effected by virtue of the Holy Ghost's operation thru these means of grace. It was, therefore, absolutely essential that the Holy Ghost should join them to fructify their work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FACT ON WHICH THE ASSURANCE OF PAUL WAS BASED

PAUL was, from the death of Stephen until his conversion, an exceedingly bitter enemy of the disciples of Jesus. His purpose seemed to be to destroy them from off the face of the earth. This intense hatred was not caused by personal enmity towards certain persons among the disciples, but by the fact that he abhorred their religious views. They preached that Jesus was the Christ; for this reason he regarded them as apostates and traitors to the religion of the fathers, and as such, worthy of death. He considered it an act of devotion to his God to persecute the followers of the despised and crucified Jesus.

From being the most zealous enemy, he suddenly became the most devoted and energetic follower of Jesus and His religion. To make this change possible, Paul must have experienced a definite, clear, and unmistakable revelation which could stand the test of reflec-

tion; which could retain its clearness of outline and its importance thruout a long life of unceasing labor amid overwhelming hazards. In II Cor. 11:23-28, he tells of sufferings he had endured for the sake of Jesus: "Are they"—referring to the false teachers—"ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

When Paul set his face to walk the path he describes in the passage quoted above, he was a young man with the brightest hopes of

reaching an eminent position among his own people. He had advantages possessed by few. By birth a Roman citizen, tho of pure Jewish blood; highly endowed by nature; thoroly educated both in Jewish and Greek learning; of unblamable habits and character; of zealous and aggressive disposition; a passionate adherent of Jewish theology. At the time of his conversion to discipleship, he was the powerful agent of the ecclesiastical organization which purposed to accomplish what the crucifixion of Jesus had not accomplished. He had thus already risen to a position of great power; a position which at the time must have been regarded to be of the greatest importance.

What a contrast! The mighty persecutor voluntarily surrenders his position of power; he throws away the favor of the mighty and the good will and respect of his people; he sacrifices all the hopes and aspirations which he formerly cherished. He does this to join in with those whom he formerly persecuted, and to adore the name of Jesus, which previously had been so abhorrent to him.

Who caused this remarkable change? *The risen Lord Jesus.*

The conversion of Paul is related three times

in the Acts. In 9: 1-20 Luke tells it as an historian. In 22: 3-16 Luke records how Paul told it in the Hebrew tongue in Jerusalem to the Jews who wanted to stone him. In 26: 4-18 Luke narrates how Paul told it to the Roman governor Festus and to king Agrippa. Each time the emphasis is definitely laid on the fact that Jesus appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus, where Paul intended to arrest the disciples of Jesus and to bring them to Jerusalem for trial.

The revelation on the road to Damascus was so glorious that Paul at once understood that it came from the Lord. That this Lord was Jesus, he did not know until, having asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" he received the definite reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9: 5, 6.)

When he arose from the ground, to which he in fear and terror had fallen, and opened his eyes, he found that he had become blind. His companions had to lead him into the city. When a disciple of Jesus, Ananias by name,

had come to him, at the express command of Jesus, and had placed his hands on Saul, he received his sight again. "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales." When Ananias came, three days had passed by since Paul lost his sight thru the revelation on the road. Three days are under ordinary circumstances a very short period of time. For Paul these days must have been long, and very terrible. The image of Him who so gloriously had revealed Himself to him in the way, and who had left His imprint upon him thru physical blindness, must unceasingly have stood before his mental vision all this time. How the words, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," must have burned in his soul! The realization of what he had been doing during these years of persecution must have tormented him, filling him with fear and shame. So profoundly was his soul agonized that during the three days he did not eat, nor did he drink.

When the glorious person in the appearance informed him that in persecuting the disciples, Paul was persecuting Him, Jesus, it is stated that he trembled and was astonished. He had been so sure that Jesus was an impostor.

During the three days the question must again and again have come up in his mind: Could it really be Jesus whom he met face to face on the road? Try as he would to satisfy his conscience and to follow his desires, he could not escape the conviction that it actually was Jesus, for the words were plain, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." What had he done? Persecuted the Lord, the God of his fathers, instead of serving Him! How terrible! What a sinner had he not been! And yet, he had thought himself unblamable. How perfectly blind had he not been in spiritual matters. But could it be Jesus! Could this Lord be the Jesus who had been crucified, who died, who had been buried? This question was forever put away, when Ananias, this stranger to him, unexpectedly came to him in his misery and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 9: 17.) And then he delivered in the name of "The God of our fathers" the same wonderful message regarding Paul's work in the future (Acts 22: 12-15), which Jesus gave him, when He appeared to him in

the way. (Acts 26:15-18.) Ananias sealed the truth of his message by knowing what had happened on the way and by restoring his sight. There could be no mistake. Jesus was the Lord. He was the Messiah. Not the disciples, but he, Paul, and those with him were mistaken. Having received the remission of sin and the Holy Ghost in baptism, the contest was over. He knew what it would mean. He would be an outcast among those who formerly honored him. It could not be helped. Better to be cast out by men, than to be cast out by God, who had granted grace, where He had every right to condemn. He was, therefore, "not disobedient to the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and thruout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (Acts 26: 19, 20.) Thus he began a ministry whose hardships and whose results never have been equalled by that of any man. Never was his conviction of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus shaken. He kept his faith until he had finished his course. He must seal his testimony with his blood. Nevertheless, he does not falter, but

looks forward to the martyr's death, so near at hand, with noble fortitude and exalted joy. He says: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (II Tim. 4: 6-8.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

ARE THE FACTS CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT FOR US?

WE have now seen how the Eleven and Paul became absolutely certain that Jesus arose from the dead. We have also seen how unreasonable and impossible the resurrection at first seemed to them,—because of their “hardness of heart,”—and how slowly their unbelief was overcome, even when “infallible proofs” were placed before them. The records show that John alone believed before he had been convinced by the use of his senses. No one can, therefore, justly say that the Apostles were predisposed for accepting the resurrection as a fact. Neither can it be denied that they were sane and matter of fact men, who demanded adequate proofs, before they accepted a fact so remarkable.

Now the nature of a historical fact is such that only those who live at the time it happens and are present at the time it happens can ascertain its reality by the use of their senses. Those not present at the time, as well as suc-

ceeding generations, must depend for their information on the testimony of those present. This is true of the resurrection of Jesus as an historical fact. In chapter three we read the clear and definite testimony of those who had ascertained the fact by use of their senses. In the succeeding chapters we have the evidence presented on which their certainty was based.

Why should not we admit that their testimony is true and, therefore, accept the resurrection of Jesus on the third day as a real, an historical fact? We accept their testimony as true in other matters. When we believe that Jesus lived and died, our faith rests upon the testimony of these same men. Theirs is the only testimony of eyewitnesses, or even of contemporaries, which is extant. What references we have to Jesus from other sources are occasioned by the results of the preaching of these Apostles.

No one seems to doubt the truth of their statement that Jesus was crucified. When we examine their testimony, do we find that they used greater care in finding out that it truly was Jesus who was crucified than they did in ascertaining that He actually had risen from the dead? But why accept as true the less

carefully investigated fact and reject the one so carefully investigated into? They would have risked nothing in preaching that Jesus was put to death, but they risked their lives in preaching that He arose again on the third day!

Why not accept their testimony as true?

The witnesses are trustworthy and credible. There is a large number of them. They are perfectly agreed. They do not testify to a dream, which the one or the other of them had; nor to an opinion, arrived at by means of speculation and discussion, but to a fact, which was repeatedly found to be true by the use of their senses. This fact was ascertained to be true, not only by one or two, but by large numbers of men, even by hundreds at the same time. They were so certain of the fact that they gave their time and strength, amidst the greatest of dangers, thruout years of strenuous and unceasing labor to make known this fact so important, so absolutely necessary for the salvation of mankind; and this they did without any possible hope of worldly gain, worldly pleasure, or honor. Why should we not accept their testimony as true? Even the most bitter opponents are constrained to admit that

the Apostles firmly believed that Jesus actually arose from the dead. Why deny that they *knew* that He arose? They do not testify merely to a belief in His resurrection, but to the *knowledge* of His resurrection.

Some base their refusal to believe the resurrection of Jesus as a fact on what they call discrepancies in the Apostolic testimony. Even these men must admit, however, that there is absolute unanimity in the testimony respecting the resurrection itself. But they say that there are "discrepancies" regarding certain details, such as the number of women who visited the grave Easter morning, the time of the visit, the number of the angels they saw there, the place where they saw them, the number and the order of the appearances of Jesus. That these discrepancies, so called, do not constitute the real reason for the denial is evidenced by the fact that these same men do not deny that Jesus was crucified, tho there are "discrepancies" of a similar nature, due to the same causes in their report of the crucifixion.

These socalled discrepancies are due to the fact that all the Evangelists are so very brief in all they say about the person of Jesus, His words, and His work. This is true respecting

His resurrection as well as respecting other phases of His life. Whatever one of them states is true, even in detail, but so many things are left unsaid (John 21: 25) that we have not the knowledge necessary to arrange these details in their exact chronological order. And surely no one can justly say that when several independent writers or witnesses mention only some of the many facts in a case, *then they must mention the same* facts, otherwise their testimony is untrue. If this principle should prevail in our courts of justice, every case, in which more than one witness was called, would have to be dismissed.

The fact that an Evangelist does not mention a certain fact or a certain appearance of Jesus, is not due to a lack of knowledge, but to his choice of material. As an illustration compare Luke 24: 49-53 with Acts 1: 1-14. That these two books are written by the same writer is clear from Luke 1: 1-4 compared with Acts 1: 1, 2.

Neither the method nor the aim of the Evangelists were those of modern scholars. Should modern scientific divines have had the opportunities of the sacred writers, the New Testament would have become a whole library

instead of a book which can easily be used by all who can read.

* * *

Those, who have read with care in their English New Testament Luke's narration of Paul's conversion in chapter nine of the Acts and then compared this with the record in chapter twenty-two, where it is stated how Paul told it to the Jews in Jerusalem, may honestly contend that there is not only a discrepancy, but a real contradiction. In Acts 9:7 we read: "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." In Acts 22:9 we read: "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." That the first passage omits to mention what the second passage relates relative to the fact that the men with Paul saw the light is no contradiction, neither is it a discrepancy. But in the first passage it is definitely stated that the men *heard* the voice, while in the second passage it is definitely stated that they *heard not* the voice of Him who spoke to Paul. One passage affirms what the other passage denies. Hence

a direct contradiction. Any one who takes the trouble to refer to the Greek original will at once notice that the construction in the two passages is entirely different. In the first passage the word translated "hear" is construed with the Accusative case; in the second passage it is construed with the Genitive case. The difference in construction designates an important difference in meaning. In the passage where the word meaning "hear" is construed with the Genitive case, it is not the hearing which is emphasized, but the *attention* paid to that which is heard. A more correct translation of the second passage is the following: And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they *did not pay attention* to the voice of Him that spake with me. What they saw filled them with fear to such an extent that, altho they heard a voice, they paid no attention to it or to what it said.

There is, therefore, no foundation for claiming a contradiction on the part of the sacred writer. It is the translator who is guilty of inexactness.

* * *

Others reject the resurrection of Jesus because they find that learned men, that even

theological professors and clergymen, refuse to accept it as a fact. There are many matters whose nature are such that the unlearned cannot well make personal investigations but must accept the verdict of the learned. The question before us is not a matter of that kind. The New Testament is the original source of information regarding Jesus. It is written in so clear a style and in so simple a language that those who know how to read are able to read it and to understand what it teaches. It is not much learning which is necessary for the apprehension and acceptance of its great doctrines. It is the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit which is necessary. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not conditioned by much learning, but by earnest and believing prayer. (Luke 11: 13.)

Learning is indeed a very useful instrument, which is worthy of great respect. But it is utterly wrong to make a god of it or to make gods of learned men. And he, who rejects the clearly stated truths of Scripture for the reason that some learned man or men reject them, becomes guilty of idolatry. On him the curse of the law rests. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and

maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” (Jer. 17: 5.)

The learned who reject the resurrection of Jesus, reject also His miracles, His divinity, His atonement. In short, they reject Jesus. They simply follow in the footsteps of the Sadducees, scribes, and high priests—the learned laymen, teachers, and divines—of the time of Jesus. Let us remember that all learning does not lead to spirituality any more than all physical labor develops the athlete. There is much manual labor which, if persisted in, will destroy the athlete, so there is much learning which destroys spirituality.

* * *

Others reject the resurrection of Jesus for the reason that they consider it an impossibility that He should have risen from the dead. Thus a learned man can state in considering the resurrection of Jesus as an explanation of the empty grave, that tho the evidence (for the resurrection) were fifty times stronger than it is, any other explanation would be preferable. And it is not only the resurrection of Jesus which is considered an impossibility. Every miracle is declared to be an impossibility.

Impossibility is a relative term. What may be impossible for one person, may not be impossible for another person. It is an impossibility for an infant a week old to carry a 49 lb. bag of flour, but it is a small matter for an ordinary man. Again, what is impossible for one kind of being, need not be impossible for a being of a higher order. The fact that it is an impossibility for one man to raise another man from the dead, yes, even tho it is impossible for him to see how it can be done, that does not make it an impossibility for a personal and omnipotent God.

When a matter is declared to be a fact by a number of trustworthy men who repeatedly have personally experienced the truth of the fact by the legitimate use of their senses, this fact cannot be proven false by stating that it is impossible that the fact could have happened. Those who employ this method of argumentation copy the ignoramus who understands neither evidence nor argument, and who, therefore, relies on his own knowledge and experience as the sole criterion of what is true.

Suppose some one fifty years ago should have maintained that some day men would be

able to speak with one another, tho thousands of miles apart. How many would not have declared this impossible? The more scientific objectors would have called attention to the fact that the experience of ages as well as the laws governing the transmission of sound thru space conclusively showed that it could not be done. When the telephone was invented and perfected it became very possible. Today we can do what would have been declared impossible a dozen years ago. With the invention of the wireless, distance here on earth is practically eliminated as far as sound is concerned. Why? Because God has laid down in nature remarkable forces and laws. These forces and laws have existed from creation, but only recently has man learned to use them. Why should it be impossible for the Author of life to raise the dead?

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26: 8.) Paul puts this question to king Agrippa, who knew the Old Testament Scriptures and, therefore, also knew what kind of a God they portray. To say that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead would be an impossibility for God, as He is revealed in the

Scriptures, shows a woeful ignorance of facts or a fearfully perverted disposition.

How then can honorable men, men who do not get their opinions ready-made from others, claim the resurrection of Jesus to be an impossibility? For this reason: They do not merely reject Jesus as the Jews rejected Him, but they also reject God, as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures. In His place they set up a god, fashioned by their own intellect according to their own understanding and desire. Even tho man uses his intelligence to the utmost to make his god exalted and perfect, yet this god is man-made; hence it is not strange that many things are impossible for him.

The modern man, who claims to be at the apex of the evolution of the human race, will accept nothing as true, which does not coincide with his idea of how a thing should be. Because it does not fit in with his idea of God that He should have revealed Himself, as the Scriptures say He has revealed Himself, therefore, the Bible is discarded as the Word of God. No, God cannot be a being of that kind. In the Bible, God tells us what a glorious beginning our race had and to what a glorious goal He desires to raise it thru Christ. Mod-

ern man, clinging to his man-made doctrines says, "No, that is all wrong! It cannot be that way. If what the Bible teaches is true, then our doctrines are wrong, and they must be right." Yes, so stupendous has man's knowledge of God become, since he discarded a divine revelation and depends for his knowledge of God on his own speculations, that he has discovered that God is too moral a being to perform miracles. Jesus could not arise from the dead, if He were divine. It would have been wrong of Him to do so. God could not raise Him from the dead, even tho He had paid in full the penalty of the world's sin. It would be a miracle to raise Him from the dead. God is too moral to perform miracles; hence, Jesus must abide in the grave.

There is a wisdom of God and there is a wisdom of man, or as it is called, the wisdom of this world. They are very different. The one is the wisdom of a being with infinite knowledge, infinite power to act, and with the will to act according to purposes wholly noble and good. The other is the wisdom of a being with very limited knowledge of the real nature of things, with small power to act; a being of selfish aims and purposes. The wisdom of

God must, therefore, be wholly different from the wisdom of man. When man rejects the wisdom of God and relies on man's wisdom, he necessarily must go wrong, for he starts out on the wrong road. In other words, as he starts his thinking from a false premise, his conclusion must be wrong. Therefore Paul says: "The world by wisdom knew not God." (I Cor. 1:21.)

The person who holds the principle that man's wisdom is sufficient or supreme is, in the terminology of the Scriptures, carnal. "But the carnal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14.) Such a person may be in great need of many things, but what he needs *above* all else is what Nicodemus needed, namely a new birth, a birth from above, a *spiritual* birth in order to become a partaker of the wisdom of God.

It is nothing less than Satanic haughtiness on the part of man to reject the wisdom of God, revealed to us in the Scriptures. Pride goeth before a fall. And a terrible fall follows: God is either denied, or He is eliminated from the world and the affairs and des-

tiny of man, or He is inseparably mingled with the universe in such a way as to limit His intelligence to the sum total of man's intelligence and to make His knowledge grow only as much and as fast as man's knowledge grows. Thus proving the statement of Paul: "Professing themselves wise, they became fools." (Rom. 1: 22.)

To live contrary to the laws of health weakens our physical powers. To live contrary to the laws which govern our life as intelligent, moral beings weakens this life. A very fundamental law in this life is that it is right to accept the reality of a fact, which has been carefully investigated into, and which is testified to by several trustworthy *witnesses*. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is such a fact. The real reason for rejecting it is manifestly not the lack of testimony of the highest order. The real reason is that a miracle is not comprehensible to our natural reason.

From the open grave of Jesus Christ the rays of God's power, wisdom, and love shine forth in resplendent glory, illuminating not only life on this side the grave, but eternity itself. Shall we walk in this full light, or shall

we forsake it to follow those who grope about in darkness, guided only by the flickering candlelight of natural reason?

Man is strangely inconsistent! Thus it seems to be becoming fashionable in our day for men, who reject the splendidly established fact of the resurrection of Jesus, saying it is too unreasonable to be true, to turn to those "that peep and that mutter" (Is. 8:19) for clear speech concerning the hereafter, and to seek in the darkened seance chamber for light on immortality. They turn from a church which is built on historical facts, a church which stands for truth, come what may, to embrace a superstitious cult which is denounced and forbidden in the Word of God; a cult which is notorious for trickery and deceit. Truly a somersault with a vengeance! First discard the Word of God because all its teachings are not conformable to human reason, then discard reason in order to embrace superstition.

CHAPTER NINE

ADDITIONAL PROOFS FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

I. The Report of the Guard at the Grave

“Now when they [the women] were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken council, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept. And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” (Matt. 28: 11-15.)

This explains why the leaders of the council did not, when the Apostles were brought before that august body, meet the bold confession of the Apostles by an equally bold denial. They were convinced that the Roman soldiers had told the truth. Had they not been cer-

tain that the Roman soldiers were telling them the truth, they would have held them in derision and laughed at their report. They would have demanded of Pilate that he punish the guard for leaving their post before they were relieved from duty. Instead of persecuting the soldiers, they gave them "large money." Why, if not to bribe them to tell a lie?

But how could this transaction become known? That the leaders among the Jews did not spread the news of it, we can well understand. But it must have been a very difficult thing for these soldiers to keep silent about the remarkable occurrence at the grave. And we must notice, it was only "some of the watch" who went to the high priest and were bribed. The others would spread the true report. The bribed ones would soon admit why they spread a false report. The money was already in their possession.

II. *The Rise of the Christian Church*

Jesus was crucified in the city of Jerusalem. Fifty days after the crucifixion, the Apostles began publicly to preach, in this same city, that Jesus arose from the dead on the third day. This shows, as was said, not merely courage on the part of the Apostles, it shows

an unshakable conviction of the truth of their message.

This preaching bore remarkable fruit. Thousands were convinced of the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus. Scarcely had the bold preachers begun their work, however, before the Sadducees, the rationalists of that age, "being grieved that they taught the people and preached thru Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2), laid hands on Peter and John, who at the time were preaching in the temple, and put them in jail.

The next day the two Apostles were brought before the "rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest." (Acts 4:5, 6.) Since so august a body assembled to sit in judgment on these two fishermen, we can understand what a tremendous shakeup the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus gave these men, who had convicted Jesus and had caused Him to be put to death. Nor did it put them more at ease, when Peter and John boldly accused them of the murder of Jesus and exultingly proclaimed Him the Messiah, raised by God from the dead.

Why did not the men, here present, who had caused the guard of Roman soldiers to be placed at the grave, and who had received from this guard a report of "all the things that were done" there,—why did they not flatly deny the resurrection of Jesus? Why did they not prove that He did not arise from the dead? Were they so ignorant as not to know that the best way of stopping the mouth of these preachers and of making their preaching harmless was to show that the content of the preaching was false? They did not deny that Jesus arose from the dead. They knew it to be true. They knew that Peter and John knew that Jesus actually had risen from the dead. So they had to be content with commanding the Apostles strictly "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus". (Acts 4: 18.) With wonderful wisdom Peter and John answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4: 19, 20.)

From this answer the judges knew that the preaching would continue. From their opposition to this preaching, we can understand

that these mighty men would use every means in their power to bring to naught the preaching of these "unlearned and ignorant men". (Acts 4:13.) They would, therefore, gather and publish broadcast every evidence obtainable to prove that Jesus remained dead. Living in the city where it all happened, having at their disposal the necessary means and power, it should have been an easy matter for them to prove this, if the Apostles were proclaiming a falsehood. In spite of their efforts, the preaching of the Apostles gained ground, for "God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty." (I Cor. 1:27.)

The members of the council did not take this lightly. They were "filled with indignation" (Acts 5:17) and resorted to the means always employed by unscrupulous men, who have the power; they used force. The Apostles, this time seemingly all of them, were again arrested and thrown into prison.

The angel of the Lord delivered them from the prison this time; and he urged them to continue to preach in the temple to the people. When the officers came to fetch them from the prison, they found the prison shut and the

keepers before the doors, but the prison was empty. "Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would lead." (Acts 5:24.) Receiving word that the men, whom they thought were in prison, were as a matter of fact preaching in the temple, the captain of the temple went with the officers to bring them to trial. However, they dared not use violence for fear of being stoned by the people.

This time the Apostles were brought before the council and "all the senate of the children of Israel." (Acts 5:21.) The high priest addressed them. He is indignant, but is nevertheless unable to conceal his fear. He says: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (Acts 5:28.) A most influential doctor of law in this assembly, who probably was ignorant of the report brought by the guard at the grave, and who manifestly had been powerfully impressed by the testimony of the Apostles, succeeded in preventing a death sentence from being passed by reminding his

colleagues that if the Apostolic message was of men, it would of itself come to naught, while if it was of God, they could not stop it. The Apostles were beaten, however, and again commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus.

How can anyone escape the conviction that the powerful and resourceful council, which forced the mighty Roman governor to pass against his will the death sentence on Jesus, must have used every means within its immense power to prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead? And how can anyone avoid the conviction that if Jesus remained dead, the council must have been able to prove this so convincingly that the Apostles would have been laughed out of town without a single follower? Instead of this happening, a mighty congregation was established there; a congregation consisting, not only of the common people, but of "a great company of the priests [who] were obedient to the faith". (Acts 6: 7.)

Deny the miracle of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and the rise of the Christian church becomes a miracle absolutely in a class by itself. The miracles of the Bible, the resurrection included, are readily explained as acts performed for a gracious purpose by a

personal and omnipotent God. If the Christian church is built on a falsehood and for the purpose of propagating that falsehood, the miracle of its origin cannot be assigned to divine aid. Moreover, it must be evident that these eleven fishermen and Paul, even if they were supermen, could not have built a church of the character of the Christian church on a falsehood.

The struggles we have mentioned in this chapter were not the only ones the Apostles had in founding the church in Jerusalem. It was only the beginning. The sane and humane counsel of Gamaliel was ignored just as soon as the leaders discovered, thru the stoning of Stephen, that they could rely on the fury of the mob. Tho Stephen died, as did Jesus, praying for his murderers, his death became the signal for a bloody persecution against the disciples of Jesus. The leaders of this persecution were, to begin with, the ecclesiastical authorities. Soon they were joined by the civil authorities with king Herod in active participation. (Acts 12: 1-6.) The purpose for which Jewish church and state united was to destroy Christianity completely. They failed, for they fought against God, who has means

whereby the weak can confound the mighty. (I Cor. 1:27.) True, the disciples were scattered abroad, but as they "went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4), the persecution helped to spread far and wide (Acts 11:19) the message and the church it sought to destroy; for the risen Lord Jesus was with His feeble instruments.

III. *The Testimony of the Christian Church*

(1) *In its Confessions*

The Christian church was founded in Jerusalem thru preaching the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ. In a comparatively short time it was established also in the more important centers, not only of Palestine, but of Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Babylonia, and other countries. In fact thru-out the whole *civilized* world of that period. And everywhere it was founded by preaching the same message. Jesus commanded that all nations should be made His disciples, and this work has been carried on down thru the centuries, until the church is spread practically over the face of the whole earth. Wherever it has come, it has come by preaching the same

fundamental truths, proclaimed by the Apostles in Jerusalem. There is no break in this testimony as there is no break in the existence of the church. Each succeeding generation of Christians has sprung from its preceding generation, from the time of Peter and Paul to our own day. In every age and in every clime the church has steadfastly confessed the resurrection of Jesus. To be sure, there have been within its portals in every age traitors, who have denied and sought to pervert its faith. But even in the ages when they were most numerous and powerful, the church steadfastly proclaimed in its confession the resurrection of Jesus to be a fact.

It is, indeed, sad to know that the Christian church is divided into so many denominations because of doctrinal differences. Another proof, if it were necessary, that sin abounds so that man needs a divine Redeemer, whose grace abounds much more. (Rom. 5: 20.) But notice! Divided tho the church may be because of disagreements in many matters, there is perfect agreement regarding the resurrection of Jesus. Every Christian denomination, every Christian sect has confessed and does now with one mouth confess in

the Creed: He “arose again on the third day.” This perfect agreement prevails not only when the ancient and brief confession, which we call the Creed, is used; the agreement prevails just as fully in elaborate confessions prepared by the different Christian denominations in different ages.

Nearly twenty centuries of consistent testimony! Contrast this with the changing philosophical systems, which are the evershifting grounds of all unbelief, excepting the most vulgar! Truth stands forth firm and unchanging as the “everlasting hills”. Error is unstable and fickle as the quagmire.

(2) *In its Festivals*

The whole Christian church celebrates two festive days which, from the very beginning to our own day, have constituted a definite testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. These festive days are Sunday and Easter Sunday. Sunday is the weekly and Easter Sunday the yearly return of that glorious first Easter Sunday, glorious for the only reason that Jesus arose from the dead on that day.

The Christian church had its origin in Palestine, the land of the Jews. The first mem-

bership was Jewish. Furthermore, Christianity is the Jewish religion in its fruitage. But the Jews had for ages, ever since their origin as an independent people, celebrated Saturday as their weekly holiday. The Mosaic law commanded them most emphatically to do this. The Apostles were Jews, who continued to observe the Jewish Sabbath as well as the other Jewish festivals. From earliest childhood they had been accustomed to meet for public worship on the seventh day of the week. Yet we find that they honor the first day of the week with the name "The Lord's day", and that they use this day for public worship. Why this honoring of the first day of the week? Why should it be called the Lord's day in preference to other days? Why should this day especially be a day of praise and thanksgiving? There is one adequate reason and only one. It is this: Jesus arose from the dead on that day, thus triumphing over His and our enemies. It is indeed the Lord's day.

The origin of Sunday as the day for public worship and its name "The Lord's day" are inexplicable without the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection accepted, every one sees how fitting and perfectly natural it is that the first

day of the week should be called "The Lord's day" and become the day for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

* * *

Jesus was crucified the day before the Jewish festival of the Passover, and He arose again from the dead the day after this festive day. The yearly return of this festival would then bring the anniversary of Christ's resurrection. As the Jews commemorated one event and the Christians commemorated another, the early Christian church determined the time for Easter in such a manner that it would not coincide with the Passover. Easter is the yearly commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus; and the Christians did not want it to appear as if they joined with the Jews in celebrating the deliverance from Egypt. That event was, indeed, a great and gracious act of God; but Easter commemorates a far greater one. Christ proclaimed by His resurrection that He had truly delivered, not one people merely, but mankind, not from the bodily bondage under a prince of this world, but from the bondage of sin under the sceptre of the Prince of Darkness.

More than three hundred years passed by before the Christian church began to celebrate the Christmas festival. Easter, on the other hand, has been celebrated every year since that first Easter Sunday. Every year it has been celebrated in commemoration of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Few indeed are the events of history authenticated in so forceful a way!

IV. *The Testimony of the Enemies*

When the terrified Roman guard had reported to the chief priests what had occurred at the grave of Jesus early Easter morning, the chief priests called in the elders of the people and, after consulting together, bribed the guard to spread the report that disciples of Jesus came during the night and stole the body, while they slept. This explanation of the empty grave was commonly reported among the Jews up to the time that Matthew wrote his gospel. (Matt. 28:15.) It may be of interest to note what the learned Jew, Alfred Edersheim, says concerning this explanation. "Whatever else may be said, we know that from the time of Justin Martyr this has been the Jewish explanation. Of late, however, it

has, among thoughtful Jewish writers, given place to the so-called 'Vision-hypothesis.'" (Life and Times of the Messiah; vol. II, page 637, 5th ed.)

This denial of the resurrection is, in fact, a most excellent testimony to the truth of it. In the first place it is admitted, by these first opponents, that the grave was empty in the morning of the third day after the burial of Jesus. Friend and foe admit that the grave was empty at the time stated. This is of the greatest importance. Can a fact be more fully attested to than the empty grave is attested to? In the second place it is admitted that the enemies of Jesus had not taken the body away. In the third place, the charge that the disciples of Jesus came during the night and stole the body, while the guard slept, is not made in good faith. For the leaders among the Jews were, as we have seen, very anxious to prove that Jesus did not arise from the dead. Hence, if they had believed that the Roman guard had been remiss in their duty, they would have spared no effort to prove this and to have had the soldiers punished for their neglect according to Roman law. To do this, they would at once have brought to the Roman governor

a formal charge against his soldiers. He could not have passed by in silence so grave an accusation as that a Roman soldier had slept, while on guard duty. An investigation would have followed. The facts in the case would have become public. Why did not the Jewish leaders bring this charge against the soldiers? Can there be any other reason than this that they were convinced of the fact that the soldiers had not been remiss in their duty? For fear of an investigation, these leaders did not even dare to assert publicly that the guard had slept at their post. They bribed the soldiers to make this statement. In addition to the money given the soldiers, they promised to make the necessary explanation to the governor, should the matter come to his attention.

The report these bribed soldiers spread bore the seal of falsehood. How could they know that it was disciples of Jesus who stole the body, if they were asleep? Would a guard on duty, even if they did slumber, sleep so soundly that they would not have heard the noise of those, who had to remove the great stone, rolled before the opening of the grave? If they awoke, when the stone was rolled away, and saw that the disciples were stealing the

body, why did they not pursue and capture the men, who were burdened with the body of a dead man?

It is a common thing for those who deny the resurrection of our Lord to make much noise about the fact that one Evangelist does not mention matters which another Evangelist relates. They even claim that silence on the part of an Evangelist, concerning matters related by other Evangelists, is proof that the first Evangelist is ignorant of the matters related by the others; as if the sacred writers were in duty bound to relate everything about Jesus of which they had any knowledge. But the silence on the part of the leaders of the Jews respecting a reasonable explanation of the empty grave; their silence in presenting proofs against the resurrection of Jesus; their silence in preferring charges against the soldiers,—all speak in a clear and emphatic language. There was a multitude of things to relate about Jesus. The Evangelists had to make a choice. Each chose what he, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, considered most important. The leaders of the Jews desired to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. When they bring *no* proofs, it must be because they

had *none*. They have to admit that the grave is empty, as it would be if Jesus arose. When they who had had the grave sealed and a guard placed there could not give a better explanation of the empty grave than they did give, it must be because the only good, the only true explanation was that given by the Apostles: "The Lord is risen indeed."

V. Proofs Deducible from the Arguments of Those Who, from the Apostolic Age to Our Own Day, Deny the Resurrection of Jesus.

That the grave of Jesus was empty in the morning of the third day after the burial, is definitely stated by the sacred writers. We saw how the women, how Peter and John had carefully investigated the matter. This important fact was conceded by the enemies of Jesus. When they who had caused the grave to be sealed and a guard of soldiers placed there, admit that the grave was empty, it becomes a fact incontestably certain. It is admitted at the time by all. Yet men who lived 1800 years after the events expect us to take their word for it that the grave was not empty.

That the enemies admitted the grave to be empty, we know from the fact that they accused the disciples of stealing the body. We know it also from the fact that the Apostolic message gained such ground in Jerusalem.

Jesus had at various times foretold His resurrection on the third day. The enemies, who always were on the lookout for some word or act of Jesus which they might be able to use against Him, had carefully treasured this prediction. Convinced in their own mind that He was an impostor, they felt certain that they had at least one saying of His which would be proven false. He would, most assuredly, not arise again on the third day. But care must be exercised, lest He deceive them. He might instruct His disciples to steal the body out of the grave, and then to proclaim that He had arisen as He had foretold. Hence the need of sealing the grave. To make assurance doubly sure, they placed a guard of Roman soldiers there to keep close watch.

Suppose the watch continued at their post, until relieved by those who placed them there. When the third day was over, the Jewish leaders would come and inspect the seal on the stone to see if it had been broken. In the

presence of the guard, they would open the grave to see and to show that the body was still there. They could then testify, as could the guard, that the body was still in the grave when they examined it. He had not arisen, as He claimed He would. He was an impostor, as they had claimed all the time.—What chance would there have been for the eleven fishermen from Galilee to fill Jerusalem with their doctrine and to drive fear into the heart of the high priest that the blood of Jesus would be brought upon him and his colleagues! If the grave had not been empty and that on the third day, the evidence would so overwhelmingly have been against the Apostles that if they had persisted in preaching their unreasonable doctrine, they would have filled Jerusalem with laughter.

The grave was empty. This fact conceded by all at the time investigation was possible, must, therefore, be taken into consideration by all who deny the resurrection; otherwise the arguments for their denial are of no value whatever. To argue against the resurrection of Jesus without explaining how the grave became empty, shows either the inability to recognize essential facts in a case; or it shows

a determined refusal to stick to and abide by facts.

The explanation of the Jewish leaders was, as we have seen, unreasonable and absurd. Yet it took into consideration the empty grave. They realized that no denial of the resurrection would be worth the breath expended on it, unless it at the same time explained the empty grave. Nevertheless, those who deny our Lord's resurrection can be divided into two classes. The one class takes the empty grave into consideration and tries to explain it. The other class offers arguments to sustain their denial, arguments which leave the fact of the empty grave without any explanation.

All obtainable evidence on the empty grave shows that the grave was empty for the reason that Jesus arose from the dead. As those who deny the resurrection and still try to explain how the grave became empty, cannot discover an explanation which can be supported by any evidence whatsoever, they are forced to resort to guesses. As the years have passed by, it has become more and more evident to the objectors that the accusation against the disciples for stealing the body is utterly groundless. Denying the resurrection, they must, however,

maintain that the body was stolen. Who stole the body? Pilate has been accused; Joseph of Arimathea has been accused; Mary of Bethany has been accused; yes, even the council of the Jews has been accused of stealing the body of Jesus. A man must be endowed with a marvelous amount of faith in his ability to guess or with an unbounded contempt for other people's ability to reason, when he dares to offer seriously such a guess as an explanation of why the grave of Jesus was empty in the morning of the third day!

There is an explanation of the empty grave which is of a different character than those mentioned above. It is, however, just as unreasonable and just as devoid of any supporting evidence. It is this: Jesus did not die on the cross. He seemed dead, but He was not dead. It is told us that the mixture of myrrh and aloes, placed in the linen wound around the body, together with the balmy spring air, enclosed in the grave, revived Him. Having come to life again in this natural manner, He forced the stone from the opening of the sepulchre and walked away.

What a perfectly easy and natural explanation! But is it not strange that the guard did

not understand this and that the Jewish leaders were unable to see into the real state of affairs?

Let us notice what this explanation of the empty grave implies. Crucifixion was a Roman method of inflicting the death penalty on criminals. Yet we are here told that Roman soldiers were not able to ascertain when a man was dead. Tho the soldiers considered Jesus dead, they pierced His side with a spear, thus inflicting a wound deadly enough to kill any man, even if he were in perfect condition and in the best of health. Jesus had passed a night of the most intense spiritual anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. This hour of sorrow had scarcely passed when He was arrested and brought to trial, first before Annas, then before the Council, later before Pilate, then before king Herod, and again before Pilate. He had been scourged, beaten with fists, crowned with a crown of thorns. He had carried His cross until He became so exhausted that He sank under its load. At nine o'clock in the forenoon He was crucified; from then on until shortly before sundown He hung on the cross, suspended by the nails driven thru His hands and His feet. Finally His side was

pierced by the spear-thrust of a soldier. *Water* and blood flowed from this wound, thus showing that He was dead. Yet we are told in the explanation under consideration, that He was not dead and that in the morning of the third day after, His strength had recovered to such an extent that He could roll the great stone away and walk out. On His pierced feet He walks that same day to Emmaus, is back in Jerusalem by evening. He comes again the next Sunday evening. No one knows where He is in the meantime. No one gives Him medical aid. This continues for forty days. The bitter enemies do not find Him. No one but disciples see Him. If anyone is so determined in his refusal to accept the testimony of the trustworthy Apostles, testimony supported by evidence of the highest order, that he prefers this explanation, I suppose nothing can be done to hinder it. But, surely, his heart is hardened.

Another explanation seemingly takes the empty grave into consideration, but only seemingly. It is told us that, when the women early Easter morning came for the purpose of anointing the body of Jesus, they did not come to the right grave. They had not taken

sufficient care in noticing the exact grave in which the body of Jesus was laid. We are informed, furthermore, of another mistake by the women that morning. They thought that they saw an angel at the grave of Jesus. This was not an angel, it was merely a young man who, noticing that the women had come to the wrong grave, an empty one, tried to tell them of their mistake, in order to direct them to the right one.

This is not an attempt to explain why the grave of Jesus was empty. This is a denial of the fact that His grave was empty. How this man learned that Joseph of Arimathea had more than one sepulchre in his garden, I do not know. That the women who were "sitting over against the sepulchre" (Matt. 27: 61), while Jesus was buried, should fail to find the right one Sunday morning, even if there were more than one sepulchre there, seems a little too strange. Peter and John must have made the same mistake. This is not all. The Jewish leaders must have forgotten which sepulchre Jesus had been laid in and stationed the guard at the wrong one. Truly strange that an empty grave should have given the soldiers so great a scare!

Why cannot those who deny the resurrection of Jesus find proofs against it? They try hard enough; yet the very arguments which they adduce to sustain their denial, must convince the unprejudiced and thinking person that the truth must be against them, for there is no *evidence* on their side. The evidence is all on the other side. This shows conclusively that Jesus truly rose from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion and death.

The objectors examined so far, have recognized the necessity of giving some kind of an explanation of why the grave of Jesus was empty Easter morning. The other class of those who deny the resurrection of Jesus do not trouble themselves about this. They deny the resurrection purely from speculative reasons. Now speculation or philosophy has a large and valid work to perform as long as it clings to facts. When it ignores facts, which unmistakably show the speculations to be false, then philosophy becomes worthless as a guide to truth. It may show considerable ingenuity and a very fertile imagination; it may be interesting, even amusing; but as a guide to truth it becomes worthless.

Some have denied the Resurrection of Je-

sus for the reason that He did not have a human body, others for the reason that there was nothing divine about Him; He was all human. Altho the records show that the report of Mary Magdalene was not believed by the Apostles and disciples, yet for ages some have affirmed that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus is due to her. It is said that she either imagined that she saw Jesus, risen from the dead, or that she wilfully fabricated the story that she saw Him. Some say the Apostles and disciples believed the resurrection for the reason that they imagined that they saw Him alive after death. It was all an illusion or a hallucination. There was nothing real about it. To accomplish their ends these objectors are compelled to declare the sacred records wrong in nearly *every respect*; yet such unbounded confidence have they in their own speculation that they even pretend to show that they know more about what really happened than did friends and foes of Jesus who were on the ground when the events occurred! The sacred records tell us what the Apostles preached and what the Church accepted as*

* Unbelieving critics have tried to discredit the greater part of the books of the New Testament by claiming that these books were not written by the men whose names they

true at the *time when active opposition was strenuously made by those who were in a position to disprove the Apostolic teaching, if it had been possible to disprove the resurrection of Jesus.* The opponents of the resurrection have the facts against them, but they disregard the facts. Yes, so incredibly reckless with regards to facts have some of them become, that they claim the idea of Christ's rising from the dead has sprung from observing that Spring overcomes Winter.

Those who teach that there is nothing more in the resurrection of Jesus than that His soul or that His personality continued to exist

bear, but by other men and at a later date. As their arguments rest on prejudice and not on facts, they have failed to establish their claims. What I desire to call attention to in this connection, however, is that even if they had succeeded in proving that the books in question were written in the second century, it would not materially change the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus for the following reasons:

1. The books of the New Testament which radical critics are constrained to admit genuine, definitely state that Jesus arose from the dead on the third day.

2. The Christian Church was founded thru the *oral preaching of the apostles.* This is true not only of the congregations in the Holy Land, but of all the churches founded by the Apostles, and they founded churches in practically all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. Now it must be a fact, self-evident to all, that since the Christian churches everywhere at once accepted the books of the New Testament as authoritative, these books presented the Christian truths, historically and dogmatically, just as the Apostles had presented them in their oral preaching, when they founded these churches.

apart from the body after His death, tho they may maintain that He sent messages or telegrams from heaven to His Apostles, yes, even tho they admit that He appeared to His Apostles as a spirit or ghost, deny His resurrection and have every shred of evidence and all the testimony of the Apostles against them.

VI. *The Continued Existence of the Christian Church Shows that Christ Must have Risen from the Dead*

Christ declared that the gates of hell should not be able to prevail over the church which He would found. This church was founded amid seemingly insurmountable difficulties. But the difficulties continued, we could say, increased. The different local churches or congregations had, to begin with, no organization thru which the one could help the other. They were without any visible head. The only head they recognized was the risen Jesus, enthroned on the right hand of the Father. That He actually had risen, that He actually guided and protected His weak and scattered flocks must be evident to anyone who has studied even cursorily the history of the Christian

Church. It may help to show how truly wonderful it is that the church has continued to exist, yes constantly spread, to notice the following experiment of establishing a religion, tried in France during the French Revolution:

“After some trial had been made of atheism and irreligion, and when the want of public worship was felt by many reflecting persons, a society was formed for the worship of God, upon the pure principles of Natural Religion. Among the patrons of this society were men beloved for their philanthropy, and distinguished for their learning, and some high in power.

“La Revelliere Lepaux, one of the directory of France, was a zealous patron of the new religion. By his influence, permission was obtained to make use of the churches for their worship. In the city of Paris alone, eighteen or twenty were assigned to them, among which was the cathedral church of Notre Dame.

“Their creed was simple, consisting of two great articles, *the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul*. Their moral system also embraced two great principles, *the love of God, and the love of man*; which were indicated by the name Theophilanthropists. Their

worship consisted of prayers and hymns of praise, which were comprehended in a manual prepared for a directory in worship. Lectures were delivered by the members, which, however, underwent the inspection of the society, before they were pronounced in public. To these were added some simple ceremonies, such as placing a basket of fruit and flowers on the altar. Music, vocal and instrumental, was used; for the latter, they availed themselves of the organs in the churches. Great efforts were made to have this worship generally introduced in all the principal towns in France; and the views of the society were even extended to foreign countries. Their manual was sent into all parts of the republic by the minister of the interior free of expense.

“Never did a society enjoy greater advantages at its commencement. Christianity had been rejected with scorn; atheism had for a short time been tried, but was found to be intolerable; the government was favorable to the project; men of learning and influence patronized it, and churches ready built were at the service of the new denomination. The system of Natural Religion which was adopted, was the best that could have been selected,

and considerable wisdom was discovered in the construction of their liturgy. But with all these circumstances in their favor, the society could not subsist. At first, indeed, while the scene was novel, large audiences attended, most of whom, however, were merely spectators; but in a short time, they dwindled away to such a degree, that instead of occupying twenty churches in Paris, they needed only four; and in some of the provincial towns, where they began under the most favorable auspices, they soon came to nothing. Thus they went on declining until, under the consular government, they were prohibited the use of the churches any longer; upon which they immediately expired without a struggle, and it is believed that not a vestige of the society now remains. . . . They found it impossible to raise, in some of their societies, a sum which every Christian congregation, even the poorest of any sect, would have collected in one day. It is a fact, that one of these societies petitioned the government to grant them relief from a debt which they had contracted in providing the apparatus of their worship, not amounting to more than fifty dollars, stating, that their annual income did not ex-

ceed twenty dollars. In other towns their musicians deserted them, because they were not paid, and frequently no person could be found to deliver lectures." (Evidences of the authenticity, etc., of Holy Scriptures by Rev. Archibald Alexander, D. D., page 29-31., Ed. of 1836.)

Contrast the favorable circumstances this society had with the persecutions against the Christians, begun by Nero and continued more or less by Roman emperors for two hundred and fifty years. Christianity was outlawed as a crime against the Roman state, and the resources of the mighty empire were marshalled against the Christians, who were put to death under the most diabolical torments the brain of man could invent.

Contrast the teachings of the society mentioned above with the doctrines of the Christian church. Surely it ought not seem strange to any one that God exists; that He should be loved, and that men should love one another! To express the hope of immortality should not have destroyed the society, for the Christian religion expresses that hope in no doubtful terms. But Christianity teaches truths which man does not like. It postulates that

the carnal mind is enmity against God; that man must be born anew; that every man is by nature depraved; that the crucified Jesus is God; that faith in Him, and not works, saves; that even the most wicked man's soul is dear to the heart of God, and that he can be saved in the same way and by the same means as are needed for the most righteous man to be saved. Yet Christianity has continued to exist; it has spread; it is today spreading further than ever before! Why? Jesus is risen from the dead. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He is the head of the Christian Church.

Not only has Christ as head guarded the church against those who have attacked it from without. In all ages there have been much more dangerous enemies, the false teachers and the traitors within the church. Yet the fundamental truths, as we find them preached by the Apostles, are yet preached; and the sacred writings, which the Roman State tried to destroy, are today circulated by the millions annually, in hundreds of different languages and dialects.* Is this done because the church

* "We have the statistics of the three Bible Societies which are the largest producers and distributors—the British and

is so splendidly organized and so efficiently managed by any visible head? Is it because it presents so unified a front against the enemy and keeps its ranks so free from hangers-on and Judases? There must be some adequate explanation of this truly remarkable phenomenon. There is, indeed. It is this: Christ is risen. He is the head of His church. He has the power to make good His claim: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against His church.*

Foreign Bible Society, the American Bible Society, and the National Bible Society of Scotland. Their figures for 1920 we tabulate:

	Year	Bibles	Test's	Portions	Total Issues
A. B. S.....	1920	331,757	717,319	2,776,325	3,825,401
B. F. B. S.	1919-20	770,679	700,223	7,045,028	8,515,930
N. B. S. S.	1920	37,087	64,612	2,028,018	2,129,717
		<u>1,139,523</u>	<u>1,482,154</u>	<u>11,849,371</u>	<u>14,471,048</u>

This was a lean year. These three Societies have issued as many as 22,400,000 volumes in a year. It is a fair estimate to say that the total issues, in 1920, from all Bible Societies and publishing houses, were 25,000,000 volumes of Scriptures." (Some Surprises from the Old Red Brick Bible House, page 9. American Bible Society, Bible House, New York City.)

"In how many languages have the Scriptures been published thruout the world? In 725 languages and dialects, up to the end of 1920. During the past decade some complete book of the Bible has appeared in a new language at the rate of one every six weeks." (Ibid. page 4.)

CONCLUSION

THE resurrection of Jesus on the third day is an historical fact. The following summary of evidence, direct and indirect, for and against the resurrection shows this conclusively. This evidence is obtained from the testimony of friends and foes of Jesus, *given at the time when evidence for and against was available.*

I. EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A. Indirect:

- 1 The empty grave.
- 2 The transformation of the Apostles:
 - a) From abject fear to heroic courage.
 - b) From silence and despair to preaching publicly with great joy and absolute assurance.
- 3 The Roman guard fled from their post of duty.
- 4 The Jewish leaders do not charge the soldiers with neglect of duty.
- 5 These leaders bribe the soldiers to spread a certain report.
- 6 The absurdity of the report these leaders caused to be circulated in explanation of the empty grave.
- 7 The Jewish leaders do not demand an investigation.
- 8 Tho extremely anxious to stop the Apostolic preaching of the resurrection of Jesus, these leaders offer no proof against it, but try to stop the preaching by using force.
- 9 These leaders do not definitely deny that Jesus arose from the dead on the third day.
- 10 The Apostolic message won converts by the thousands in Jerusalem in spite of the persistent and violent opposition of those who had influence and power enough to put Jesus to death.

B. Direct evidence for the resurrection of Jesus:

- 1 The report of the Roman guard. (Matt. 28:11.)
- 2 Jesus appeared to and spoke with Mary Magdalene in the morning of Easter Sunday. (Mark 16:9; John 20:14.)
- 3 Jesus appeared to and spoke to the other women who came to the grave Easter Sunday. (Matt. 28:9.)
- 4 Jesus appeared to Simon Peter on Easter Sunday. (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:6.)
- 5 Jesus joined the two disciples who went to Emmaus Easter Sunday. (Luke 24:13-35.)
- 6 Jesus appeared to the ten Apostles and many disciples in Jerusalem Easter Sunday in the evening. He spoke to them, showed them His hands and His feet, and partook of food in their presence. (Luke 24:36-43.)
- 7 Jesus appeared to the eleven Apostles in Jerusalem on the first Sunday after Easter. He convinced the unbelieving Thomas of the reality of His resurrection. (John 20:24-29.)
- 8 Jesus appeared to the seven Apostles by the Sea of Galilee and reinstated Peter to apostleship. (John 21:1-23.)
- 9 Jesus appeared to the eleven Apostles on a mount in Galilee and gave them their mission. (Matt. 28:16-20.)
He appeared also to more than 500 disciples. (I Cor. 15:17.)
- 10 Jesus appeared to Jacob. (I Cor. 15:8.)
- 11 Jesus appeared to the eleven Apostles at His ascension. (Acts 1:1-11.)
- 12 Jesus appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus. (I Cor. 15:9; Acts 9; 22; 26.)

II. EVIDENCE AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A. Indirect: None.

B. Direct: None.

The report that the disciples of Jesus stole the body of their Lord, while the guard was asleep, is not supported by any evidence whatsoever.

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me,

saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Rev. 1: 17, 18.)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.” Amen.



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The resurrection of Jesus, an historical

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